



# **From Plows to Combines: Homestead Heritage Parkway Planning Summary and Guidance Document**

Camille N.Y. Fink, Transportation Planner  
National Park Transportation Scholars Program  
Homestead National Monument of America  
September 15, 2006



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a summary of my planning activities for the Homestead Heritage Parkway at Homestead National Monument of America in Beatrice, Nebraska, from September 2005 to September 2006. The primary focus of my work during this assignment was to: 1) establish relationships with partners and stakeholders, 2) solicit feedback and address planning concerns, 3) research funding opportunities and apply for any appropriate grants, and 4) create a preliminary outline of wayside topics related to the proposed theme of southeastern Nebraska's agricultural history.

I began my work at the park by researching the ways in which the concept of parkways has gradually changed over time. The earliest notions of parkways in the 1800s involved large, landscaped boulevards where people could walk, ride, drive carriages, and interact socially. As the 20<sup>th</sup> century approached, the idea of parkways became one of green spaces in urban areas where conservation of nature was most important. Designers first applied parkway concepts to urban areas, but they later began to think of these roadways in the context of more rural environments.

Congress approved the first legislation for a parkway project in the National Park Service road system in 1930 with the George Washington Memorial Parkway. In 1934 it passed legislation for the establishment of the Natchez Trace Parkway along an old Native American trail. These were ambitious, large-scale road projects. The first parkway construction project, the Blue Ridge Parkway, began in 1935; the parkway was completed almost fifty years later in 1984. As I researched National Park Service parkways, I created a typology of roads, including scenic parkways, thoroughfare parkways, self-guided auto tour routes, and specialty routes.

The Homestead Heritage Parkway project emerged from the monument's latest general management plan. The parkway was envisioned as an educational driving route which would help link different parts of the park which are now physically separate. The parkway will also serve as both a physical and historical link to the nearby city of Beatrice and surrounding Gage County. An important issue related to the development of the parkway is the planned rerouting of a section of State Highway 4 which currently runs through the park. This issue of the road rerouting has been contentious as several of the previously proposed routes proved to be largely unpopular in the community. However, the road would be rerouted north of the park and what was formerly State Highway 4 would be available for development as a core section of the Homestead Heritage Parkway. The parkway as envisioned at the present time would run between Plymouth and Beatrice, a distance of approximately 14 miles.

The general management plan suggests that the principal interpretive and educational theme of the parkway be agriculture and the "farm-to-market" concept, including topics ranging from the family farm and different crop varieties to the tools and types of equipment that are used in farming operations. Modern farms could also be compared to those of homesteaders through presentation of topics such as crop yields and time devoted to ensure successful harvests.

In addition to the educational features of the parkway, this roadway will take advantage of the unique natural vistas of the park. The park's 100 acres of prairie grass make up the second-oldest restored tall-grass prairie in the United States. The parkway will run adjacent to this land, and pullouts will provide visitors access to views of the

prairie much as it appeared to homesteaders in the 1800s. The interpretive sites would also explore the rich biodiversity of prairie ecosystems.

While the parkway's general theme of agricultural history may seem clearly defined and straightforward, this "story" is actually an immense one which can be thought of as a tree with numerous branches extending over space and through time. For example, the interpretive link between homesteading and contemporary farming practices could trace the changes and evolution of agricultural practices from homesteading days to the present. An alternate way to tell this history would be to focus on the stories of current farmers who are descendants of homesteaders or have other connections to homesteading history.

Pullout designs vary in a number of ways, including vehicle capacity, interpretive features, and visitor amenities. A simpler pullout is designed for a few cars and short stops with an information sign or panel and curbing. On the other hand, more complicated pullout designs include features such as seating and restroom areas, picnic areas, extended views or vistas, and limited activity areas.

The Homestead Heritage Parkway corridor might be especially appropriate for agritourism venues, enterprises that highlight agricultural experiences. Agritourism has helped revitalize and sustain many rural communities across the country by allowing residents to diversify their income sources and capitalize on the tourism assets in the area. Significant opportunities exist for agritourism development as the parkway planning progresses. Ideally, some coordination would occur between these two efforts in order to ensure that they complement each other as much as possible.

During the past year of planning, a number of challenges arose: concerns about the rerouting of State Highway 4; maintaining public interest and participation during the course of long-term planning efforts; locating viable funding sources at this early stage in the planning process; and anticipating the substantial number of agreements with local and state government and private landowners that will be necessary for a multi-jurisdictional project such as the parkway. Planning recommendations include the following:

- Develop the timeline in conjunction with the State Highway 4 rerouting plan
- Maintain relationships with partners and stakeholders
- Focus planning on general wayside design
- Continue fundraising research and activities
- Use visioning exercises to actively engage the local community
- Explore agritourism possibilities and develop a plan
- Consider regional tourism opportunities

The parkway concept is of great interest to the community, and people want to see this project reach completion. Because the establishment of this project involves voluntary partnerships with local government and landowners, it is imperative that the planning process always be an inclusive, collaborative, and consensus-based one. Such an approach will ensure community participation and involvement and this in turn will engender maximum investment and commitment to the success of this project.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

My assignment at Homestead National Monument of America as part of the National Park Transportation Scholars Program was made possible through the generous funding of Ford Motor Company and the coordinated efforts of staff at the National Park Foundation, the National Park Service, and the Eno Transportation Foundation. I want to thank the staff of Homestead National Monument for their help throughout the year. I am especially grateful to Superintendent Mark Engler for his constant enthusiasm and guidance during my tenure at the park. I also want to thank Eddie Gonzales at the National Park Foundation for his skilled administration of this program. In addition, I would like to offer thanks to the countless members of the surrounding community who were always willing to take time out of their extremely busy days to show me around their farms and operations, attend parkway-related meetings and presentations, or just graciously share their thoughts and ideas.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. Introduction</b>	Page 1
<b>2. What is a Parkway?: A Brief History of Parkways in the United States</b>	Page 1
<b>3. A Typology of National Park Service Parkways</b>	Page 3
3.1 National Park Service Road System	Page 3
3.2 Scenic Parkways	Page 4
3.3 Thoroughfare Parkways	Page 5
3.4 Self-Guided Auto Tour Routes	Page 5
3.5 Themed and Specialty Routes	Page 6
<b>4. Homestead Heritage Parkway</b>	Page 7
4.1 Homestead National Monument of America	Page 7
4.2 Project History	Page 8
4.3 Visions and Goals	Page 9
4.4 Rerouting of State Highway 4	Page 10
4.5 End Points	Page 11
4.6 Presentations and Public Outreach	Page 13
4.7 Parkway Content and Design	Page 16
<b>5. Project Costs and Funding Summary</b>	Page 23
5.1 Estimated Project Costs	Page 23
5.2 Funding Overview	Page 23
<b>6. Planning Challenges and Recommendations</b>	Page 25
6.1 Planning Challenges	Page 25
6.2 Planning Recommendations	Page 26
<b>7. Conclusion</b>	Page 28
<b>8. Appendices</b>	Page 29

## LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

<b>Figure 1:</b>	Natchez Trace Parkway.....	Page 4
<b>Figure 2:</b>	Blue Ridge Parkway.....	Page 4
<b>Figure 3:</b>	Baltimore-Washington Memorial Parkway.....	Page 5
<b>Figure 4:</b>	George Washington Memorial Parkway.....	Page 5
<b>Figure 5:</b>	Saguaro National Park Auto Tour Route.....	Page 5
<b>Figure 6:</b>	Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area.....	Page 6
<b>Figure 7:</b>	Proposed Alignments for Rerouting of State Highway 4 .....	Page 12
<b>Table 1:</b>	Homestead Heritage Parkway Wayside Topics.....	Page 18
<b>Figure 8:</b>	Information Pullout.....	Page 20
<b>Figure 9:</b>	Picnic Wayside.....	Page 20
<b>Table 2:</b>	Preliminary Wayside Design and Production Costs.....	Page 24



## **1. Introduction**

This report provides a summary of my planning activities for the Homestead Heritage Parkway at Homestead National Monument of America in Beatrice, Nebraska, from September 2005 to September 2006. I came to Homestead National Monument from UCLA's Department of Urban Planning where I am a doctoral student with a concentration in transportation planning. The park hosted me during a 12-month assignment as part of the National Park Transportation Scholars Program, a program administered through the National Park Foundation, the National Park Service, and the Eno Transportation Foundation and funded by Ford Motor Company.

Prior to my arrival, the Homestead Heritage Parkway planning had been minimal due primarily to limited staff time. Most of the conceptual development of the parkway took place as part of the park's general management plan revision in 1999. The planning team identified the establishment of this educational roadway as one of three major changes to the physical arrangement and operational function of the park. The primary focus of my work during this assignment was to: 1) establish relationships with partners and stakeholders, 2) solicit feedback and address planning concerns, 3) research funding opportunities and apply for any appropriate grants, and 4) create a preliminary outline of wayside topics related to the parkway's proposed theme of agricultural history in southeastern Nebraska.

This document is a summary of my parkway-related planning activities during my time here at the park. The report begins with a historical overview of parkways in the United States and, more specifically, in the National Park Service system. It continues with a description of the parkway planning prior to my arrival as well as a review of the various activities I undertook and completed in the past 12 months. Finally, I present a series of short- and long-term planning recommendations for future efforts to establish and design the Homestead Heritage Parkway.

## **2. What is a Parkway?: A Brief History of Parkway in the United States**

I began my assignment at Homestead National Monument by gathering more information about the history of parkways. I was somewhat familiar with the term "parkway" from my urban planning studies, but it seemed to describe a variety of roadway projects with a number of different qualities and features. Indeed, I found the concept of parkways has gradually changed over time. The earliest notions of parkways in the 1800s involved large, landscaped boulevards where people could walk, ride, drive carriages, and interact socially. As the 20<sup>th</sup> century approached, "the concept of the parkway had evolved to include the concepts of the spiritual, restful character that these green strips of nature created in the urban landscape, and the conservation of nature was key to parkway

development.”<sup>1</sup> The urban parkway designs of this time are best exemplified in the work of Andrew Jackson Downing and Frederick Law Olmsted.

The notion of parkways even at this time was somewhat ambiguous; increased automobile use, particularly related to recreational driving, helped to further blur the boundaries and definitions. In 1925 Olmstead discussed four types of roadways he considered parkways: 1) the elongated park, or linear park, which had features of the two parks it might connect, 2) ornamental streets, which were designed to increase adjacent property values, 3) any thoroughfare with extensive landscaping and aesthetically-pleasing qualities, and 4) a combination of the elongated park and landscaped thoroughfare.<sup>2</sup> Soulli re notes that even Olmstead, one of the first designers of contemporary parkways, suggested a somewhat broad and vague definition of the parkway.<sup>3</sup>

One of the first modern parkways was the Bronx River Parkway completed in 1923. Important features of this parkway included overpasses at road crossings, curvilinear road alignment that followed the landscape, landscaping to block out nearby buildings, and the prohibition of commercial vehicles and billboards.<sup>4</sup> This 13-mile-long parkway was part an attempt to stop destruction of the Bronx River by converting land along the river to parks, connecting Westchester County and New York City with an attractive, park-like roadway, and reclaiming land that would otherwise have continued to degrade due to misuse and neglect. The Bronx River Parkway was an example of a project that “could turn an abandoned wasteland into an area of scenic beauty.”<sup>5</sup>

Designers first applied parkway concepts to urban areas, but they later began to think of these roadways in the context of more rural environments. Congress approved the first legislation for a parkway project in the National Park Service road system in 1930 with the George Washington Memorial Parkway. In 1934 it passed legislation for the establishment of the Natchez Trace Parkway along an old Native American trail. These were ambitious, large-scale road projects. The first parkway construction project, the Blue Ridge Parkway, began in 1935; the parkway was completed almost fifty years later in 1984.

The distinction between parkways and highways is one that was also unclear for some time. In 1936 the National Park Service’s Associate Director A.E. Demaray described the ways in which parkways differed from regular highways: “[He said] they were designed for passenger traffic and recreational use; they had a wider right-of-way than a normal highway so they were insulated from private property; they went through areas of scenic beauty and interest; they provided access to the best scenery even if it meant making the route longer. Also, grade crossings were eliminated, and parkways had

---

<sup>1</sup> Soulli re, Laura E. 1995. “Historic Roads in the National Park System: Special History Study.” United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Denver Service Center. <[http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online\\_books/roads/index.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/roads/index.htm)>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

minimal exits and entrances.”<sup>6</sup> The National Park Service later distributed a document in an attempt to further distinguish between the two types of roadways:

[For example, a parkway was different than a regular highway because] “it was designed for passenger car traffic and was largely for recreational use, aiming to avoid unsightly buildings and other roadside developments, which marred the ordinary highway...It was preferably located through undeveloped areas of scenic beauty and interest, and avoided built-up communities and intensively farmed lands...It aimed to make accessible the best scenery in the county it traversed. Therefore, the shortest or most direct route was not necessarily a primary consideration...Scenic easements were introduced in order to secure a maximum of protection without increasing the amount of land to be acquired in fee simple.”<sup>7</sup>

The Blue Ridge Parkway was the first major project to incorporate many of these parkway design visions and goals. A number of parkway characteristics – bridges, landscaping, natural features – eventually became incorporated into more general highway design.

### 3. A Typology of National Park Service Parkway

#### 3.1 National Park Service Road System

The National Park Service has a very extensive road network of 5,000 paved miles and 3,000 unpaved miles. Many of the roads are historical marvels of engineering and design; often the roads themselves are the featured destinations and experiences. These include roads such as Glacier’s Going-to-the-Sun Road, Yellowstone’s Grand Loop, and Sequoia’s Generals Highway<sup>8</sup> The 1920s to 1930s are often referred to as the “Golden Age” of park road construction and much of the philosophy about park roads was established during this time: “The visual appeal, intimate scale, and rustic associations of roads constructed during this period profoundly shaped the way visitors experienced national parks...A leaflet provided to park motorists [stated] “Park roads are for leisurely driving only. If you are in a hurry, you might do well to take another route, and come back when you have more time.”<sup>9</sup>

The parkways in the National Park Service system are centerpieces of the roadway network. One park historian described the important role of parkways in enriching the visitor experience: “The National Park Service’s parkways epitomize the harmonious integration of highway engineering and landscape design. Stretching for miles through

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. Source: WASO files 630, Roads General, 1934-1936, A.E. Demaray, “Discussion of Federal Parkways,” before the Council Meeting of the American Planning and Civic Association, January 24, 1936, pp. 1-4.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. Source: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Parkways: A Manual of Requirements, Instructions, and Information for Use in the National Park Service*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>8</sup> Davis, Timothy. 2005. “Historic Roads.” *Landscape Lines*, 16, p. 1. <[http://classicinside.nps.gov/documents/16 HistoricRoads%20.pdf](http://classicinside.nps.gov/documents/16%20HistoricRoads%20.pdf)>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

scenic backcountry, bucolic farmland, urban woodlands, and hallowed historic ground, national parkways preserve invaluable natural and cultural resources while affording a wide variety of attractive motoring experiences.”<sup>10</sup> While many of these roadways reflect this general goal of bringing together the driving and nature experiences, these are hardly “cookie cutter” roads. Rather, each road has a unique set of qualities, characteristics, and assets.

In reviewing the National Park Service road system, I came across a number of different kinds of roadways – some of these are specifically called parkways and others are roadways with parkway-like features. I began to group these various types of roads into four categories: 1) scenic parkways, 2) thoroughfare parkways, 3) self-guided auto tour routes, and 4) themed and specialty routes. This typology helped me think more fully about particular elements and the ways in which we could draw from these examples in the planning of the Homestead Heritage Parkway. The following sections provide short descriptions of each category of road and examples of exemplary roadways. While the Homestead Heritage Parkway is somewhat different from these roads in terms of size, scope, purpose, and interpretive content, each of these types of roads has particular design elements which will be useful in development of this parkway.

### 3.2 Scenic Parkway

Scenic parkways reflect the more traditional notions of parkway design; these roadways are the ones that most readily come to mind when one hears the term “parkway.” Many of these parkways are very lengthy and provide a variety of outdoor and recreational activities for visitors. For example, the Natchez Trace Parkway is 444 miles long and runs through Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee (Figure 1). Many visitors just drive the route, but they also have opportunities to hike, bike, horseback ride, and camp. Other scenic parkways include the Blue Ridge Parkway, a 469-mile route through North Carolina and Virginia (Figure 2), and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway in Wyoming which connects Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks.



FIGURE 1: NATCHEZ TRACE PARKWAY



FIGURE 2: BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY

<sup>10</sup> Davis, Timothy, Todd A. Croteau, and Christopher H. Marston. 2004. *America's National Park Roads and Parkway: Drawings from the Historic American Engineering Record*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

### 3.3 Thoroughfare Parkways

Thoroughfare parkways are those that run along scenic routes, but are also used heavily as commuting corridors. The Baltimore-Washington Memorial Parkway is a thoroughfare connecting two large urban centers while also providing a scenic route and access to a variety of National Park Service sites and other attractions (Figure 3). The George Washington Memorial Parkway runs along the Potomac River through Virginia, Maryland, and Washington, D.C. (Figure 4). Although the parkway is a commute route for many local residents, it also links a number of recreational and historic areas between Great Falls Park at the north end and Mount Vernon at the south end.



FIGURE 3: BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON MEMORIAL PARKWAY



FIGURE 4: GEORGE WASHINGTON MEMORIAL PARKWAY

### 3.4 Self-Guided Auto Tour Routes

Some parks have self-guided auto tour routes where motorists travel along what are most often looped one- and two-way roads with pullouts. At Saguaro National Park in Arizona, visitors travel among a series of picturesque overlooks with wayside exhibits about desert plants and wildlife (Figure 5). Visitors pick up a map showing the themed overlook locations and they travel along the route at their own pace. Stones River National Battlefield in Tennessee includes a driving route with numbered markers, trails, and exhibits to explain the park's history. The park map explains the route design to the visitor: "The major points of interest on the battlefield can be reached on the park's self-guided auto tour route. Stops are identified by a numbered marker. Short trails and exhibits explain the events at each site. The speed limit is 25 miles per hour...Begin the tour at stop 1, west of the visitor center."<sup>11</sup> Again, visitors essentially create their own itineraries on the route based on their interests and available time.



FIGURE 5: SAGUARO NATIONAL PARK AUTO TOUR ROUTE

<sup>11</sup> Source: <<http://www.nps.gov/sagu/planyourvisit/upload/Saguaro%20Wilderness%20Area.pdf>>



### 3.5 Themed and Specialty Routes

Silos & Smokestacks is a specialty route in a designated National Historical Area in northeastern Iowa encompassing 37 counties and 20,000 square miles (Figure 6). Over 80 individual attractions in the area – including museums, historical sites, agricultural demonstration areas, arts and crafts centers, parks and nature areas, and wildlife refuges – help highlight Iowa’s agricultural heritage.<sup>12</sup> These various sites are organized under six interpretive themes (with corresponding icons) related to agriculture: 1) The Fertile Land; 2) Farmers & Families; 3) The Changing Farm; 4) Higher Yields: The Science & Technology of Agriculture; 5) Farm to Factory: Agribusiness in Iowa; and 6) Organizing for Agriculture: Policies and Politics. Visitors can create an individualized travel itinerary using either a printed brochure or an interactive online map. Each site listing includes a description of the attraction’s features as well as the quick-reference icons to help visitors identify places of particular interest.



FIGURE 6: SILOS AND SMOKESTACKS NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

<sup>12</sup> Silos and Smokestacks website: <[www.silosandsmokestacks.org](http://www.silosandsmokestacks.org)>

## 4. Homestead Heritage Parkway

### 4.1 Homestead National Monument of America

Homestead National Monument – located near Beatrice, Nebraska – was created on March 19, 1936, to commemorate and interpret the impacts of the Homestead Act on the United States and the world. This law declared that anyone who was a citizen, or intended to become one, could claim 160 acres (one quarter square mile) of surveyed government land. Claimants had to improve the plot with a dwelling and crops. After five years, the land would become the property of the original filer, if that person was still on the land.

Homesteaders faced a great deal of uncertainty and numerous hardships, including drought, locusts, and blizzards; many settlers abandoned their claims. Still, the United States government distributed over 270 million acres of land between 1863 and 1886. Homestead lands were located in 30 of the 50 states, including Nebraska, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Montana, Kansas, and California. Today there are estimated to be over 93 million descendants of homesteaders in the United States.

This 240-acre monument commemorates the Homestead Act with displays examining the social, economic, and environmental impacts of this legislation. The park land encompasses 100 acres of restored tall-grass prairie as well as the site of the Freeman homestead, one of the first claims filed under the Homestead Act. The primary monument facilities currently include a visitor center and the Freeman School, a one-room schoolhouse built in 1872 and located a quarter mile west of the visitor center. The park recently started construction on a new visitor facility, the Homestead Heritage Center. This building is scheduled for completion in the spring of 2007. The monument is a tribute to the over two million homestead claims made throughout the life of the Homestead Act. Through exhibits, films, educational programs, and special events, the staff educates the public about the importance of this law to our nation's history.

The monument's mission, as stated in the 1999 General Management Plan (GMP), is the following:

The mission of Homestead National Monument of America is to maintain a memorial that commemorates and interprets the Homestead Act and its influence upon the country. The mission is to maintain the 160-acre original homestead and the Freeman School addition in a manner that provides visitors an appropriate perspective of the influences and impacts upon the land in its transition from its natural state to cultivation and agriculture.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service. 1999. "Homestead National Monument of America General Management Plan," p. 14. <<http://www.nps.gov/home/gmp.htm>>

The monument's goals are:

- To protect, reconstruct, and maintain the natural, historical, and cultural resources at Homestead National Monument
- To ensure these resources remain in good condition and within their broader historical and cultural contexts
- To contribute to broader knowledge about natural and cultural resources through management decisions based on available scholarly and scientific information
- To assist visitors in safely enjoying the range of available, accessible, diverse, and quality park facilities, services, and appropriate recreational opportunities
- To help park visitors and the general public understand and appreciate the preservation of Homestead National Monument and other National Park Service sites for future generations
- To work with volunteers and partners on projects to promote a deeper understanding of the impact of homesteading on our natural, social, and cultural histories
- To encourage the conservation and environmental sustainability of all resources

Homestead National Monument is unique as it is the only facility in the United States dedicated to the story of the Homestead Act in its broadest context. The exhibits examine a variety of topics related to homesteading, including agriculture, industrialization, Native Americans, immigration, and prairie ecology. The park maintains excellent relationships with other organizations and facilities dealing with specific aspects of homesteading history, such as the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the Nebraska State Historical Society.

## 4.2 Project History

The Homestead Heritage Parkway project emerged from the monument's latest general management plan, a document designed to guide the management and stewardship of the park for the next 10 to 20 years. In 1997, planning started for an update of the 1988 GMP which had become outdated as the park's activities and functions began to outgrow the available infrastructure. The primary overall concern was that continued reliance on the 1988 GMP "would jeopardize the National Park Service's ability to fully carry out its mission at the monument, as directed by the monument's enabling legislation."<sup>14</sup> One concern was the relationship between different visitor sites at the park as well as the park's connection to the surrounding community and rural landscape.

In early stages of research and analysis for the GMP, the planning team conducted meetings with the monument staff and at public forums to identify and discuss various critical issues to be addressed in the new GMP. The team paid particular attention to the needs of the park related to the legislated purpose and mission of the monument. It

---

<sup>14</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. 1999. "Homestead National Monument of America General Management Plan," p. 9. <<http://www.nps.gov/home/gmp.htm>>



identified ten major areas of concern to guide the development of the GMP: 1) location in the floodplain, 2) prairie restoration purpose, 3) protection of the cultural landscape, 4) traffic on State Highway 4, 5) relationship with the Freeman School, 6) legislative mandates for collection, 7) interpretation of the Homestead Act, 8) accuracy and effectiveness of the interpretive media, 9) existing facilities, and 10) boundary adjustment.

Three main prescriptions emerged from the GMP planning process: 1) the construction of a new visitor center, the Homestead Heritage Center, 2) the establishment of a separate education center, and 3) the development of an educational parkway along State Highway 4. Construction of the Homestead Heritage Center started in May 2006, and the center is slated for completion during the spring of 2007. The building presently used as the visitor center and museum will be modified to serve as the education center. The last prescription outlined in the GMP described the parkway – dubbed the Homestead Heritage Parkway – as a means to address two issues. First, the parkway would lessen the existing interpretive disconnect between the Freeman School and the rest of the park. Second, the Nebraska Department of Roads plans to relocate a three-mile segment of State Highway 4 running through the park in order to decrease the number of vehicles, particularly truck traffic, impacting and disrupting the monument site. The parkway, with its lower speed limit and decreased traffic volume, would be a means to utilize the section of roadway left once the rerouting occurs. Congress authorized the creation of the parkway in 2002 (Appendix A).

After the completion of the 1999 GMP, park staff moved forward to implement the prescriptions outlined in the plan. The Homestead Heritage Center was the primary focus of this work; this building is a major construction project with capital costs of over \$3.5 million. The Homestead Heritage Parkway remained a future goal, but the park did not have staff available to develop the parkway concept beyond the broad outline in the GMP. The opportunity arose to bring a full-time transportation planner to the park in 2005 through the National Park Transportation Scholars Program to focus largely on this project and further develop the parkway idea.

### 4.3 Visions and Goals

The initial description of the Homestead Heritage Parkway was somewhat broad in terms of location, design, and interpretive content. The 1999 GMP included the following description of the parkway plan:

The “Homestead Heritage Parkway” proposes to form an interpretive linkage, on a voluntary basis, between the Monument, including the Freeman School, and the surrounding rural countryside and communities to highlight today’s visible and tangible results of implementation of the Homestead Act. It is important to note that the NPS [National Park Service] is not recommending a formal federal designation for this parkway. Rather, the NPS views this as a voluntary interpretive tool.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

At the time, this roadway was envisioned as a four- to five-mile educational parkway which would help link two parts of the park which are now physically separate – the main visitor center (which provides access to the park’s restored prairie land and trails) and the Freeman School, a one-room schoolhouse built in 1871, half a mile west of the visitor entrance. The new visitor facility, the Homestead Heritage Center, will be located at the opposite end of the park (the east end), and the need for some type of physical and interpretive continuity between the various park elements will become even more crucial after the completion of the new center. The parkway will also serve as both a physical and historical link to the nearby city of Beatrice and surrounding Gage County.

#### 4.4 Rerouting of State Highway 4

One important issue related to the development of the Homestead Heritage Parkway is the eventual rerouting of a portion of State Highway 4 that runs through Homestead National Monument. The 1999 GMP notes that the Nebraska Department of Roads has stated that State Highway 4, including the road running through the park, “presently does not meet current standards for highway safety design. The Department is scheduled to implement safety design improvements...including changes in the road’s geometry and width to bring this highway up to modern standards and facilitate greater safety.”<sup>16</sup> The existing route and design of this road through the park concerned park management for four main reasons: 1) the potential conflict between high-speed traffic through the park and pedestrians traveling to and from the present visitor center and the Freeman School, 2) truck traffic through the park often includes loads of liquid anhydrous ammonia and ammonium nitrate – both are toxic and dangerous in the event of a spill, 3) the significant visual and aural disruptions created by a main thoroughfare running along the park’s northern boundary, and 4) the threat to cultural resources, including archeological sites.<sup>17, 18</sup>

The GMP went on to describe this rerouting plan and its relationship to the parkway development:

The monument will work in partnership with the Nebraska Department of Roads to relocate a three-mile segment of State Highway 4 to a location away from its existing alignment in order to reduce its impacts on the monument and visiting public. The remaining abandoned segment of State Highway 4 will function as a local access road through the monument, to Pioneer Acres, and to other local residences. The NPS will

---

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>17</sup> Homestead National Monument falls under Category A of the Federal Highway Administration Noise Abatement Criteria: “Lands on which serenity and quiet are of extraordinary significance and serve an important public need and where the preservation of those qualities is essential if the area is to continue to serve its intended purpose.” Source: U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration. 1995. “Highway Traffic Noise Analysis and Abatement: Policy and Guidance,” p. 8. The maximum traffic noise levels for Category A sites is 57 dBA. A 2002 traffic noise analysis indicated noise levels exceeded the 57dBA level at three of five test locations in the park and by 2025 will exceed this level at all five locations.

<sup>18</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. 1999. “Homestead National Monument of America General Management Plan,” p. 9. <<http://www.nps.gov/home/gmp.htm>>

work with the state and other local jurisdictions to establish maintenance responsibilities for the remaining abandoned segment of State Highway 4. This segment will then be adapted by the NPS to serve as the core segment of an eventual 6.4-mile “Homestead Heritage Parkway.”<sup>19</sup>

This issue of the road rerouting has been contentious in the community. Over the course of several years, the Nebraska Department of Roads has proposed a number of alternative routes for this section of State Highway 4. One route that garnered much attention would have provided a more direct and paved connection between State Highway 4 and State Highway 77; such a link would have resulted in an alignment that largely bypassed downtown Beatrice. This proposal proved to be largely unpopular with business owners in the downtown area.

At this point in time, the Nebraska Department of Roads is considering two proposed routes for the three-mile section of road described in the 1999 GMP: 1) the Juniper Road Alternative which would run west-east along Juniper Road and north-south along SW 75th Road and 2) the Middle-Alternative Modified which would run along a similar course just south of Juniper Road. Figure 7 shows these two routes and the section of State Highway 4 that would then be available for the Homestead Heritage Parkway route. Regardless of the final reroute alignment of State Highway 4, the parkway will pass through the park. The rerouting is still in the planning stages and the start date for this project has not yet been determined. However, Nebraska Department of Roads staff reported in our most recent meeting with them that the road surveying would start in 2009 and the rerouting would be complete by 2013. Staff also acknowledged that the rerouting planning would require further public meetings and some establishment of consensus around the final routing. While parkway planning can and should continue until the rerouting occurs, implementation of this project will likely occur after the rerouting is completed.

Although the parkway would likely extend much farther east and west from the endpoints of this segment, this stretch of road in the park would serve as the physical and interpretive backbone of the parkway. This is due primary to the road’s proximity to the Homestead Heritage Center and other park facilities. The National Park Service would develop agreements with local governmental entities for the cooperative maintenance of this roadway. From my discussions with people in the community, two of the primary concerns related to the parkway are 1) the potential acquisition of agricultural land for the Middle-Alternative Modified route and 2) possible the decreases in speed limits along portions of State Highway 4 to accommodate parkway traffic. Both issues will likely reemerge in future public discussions regarding rerouting of the roadway.

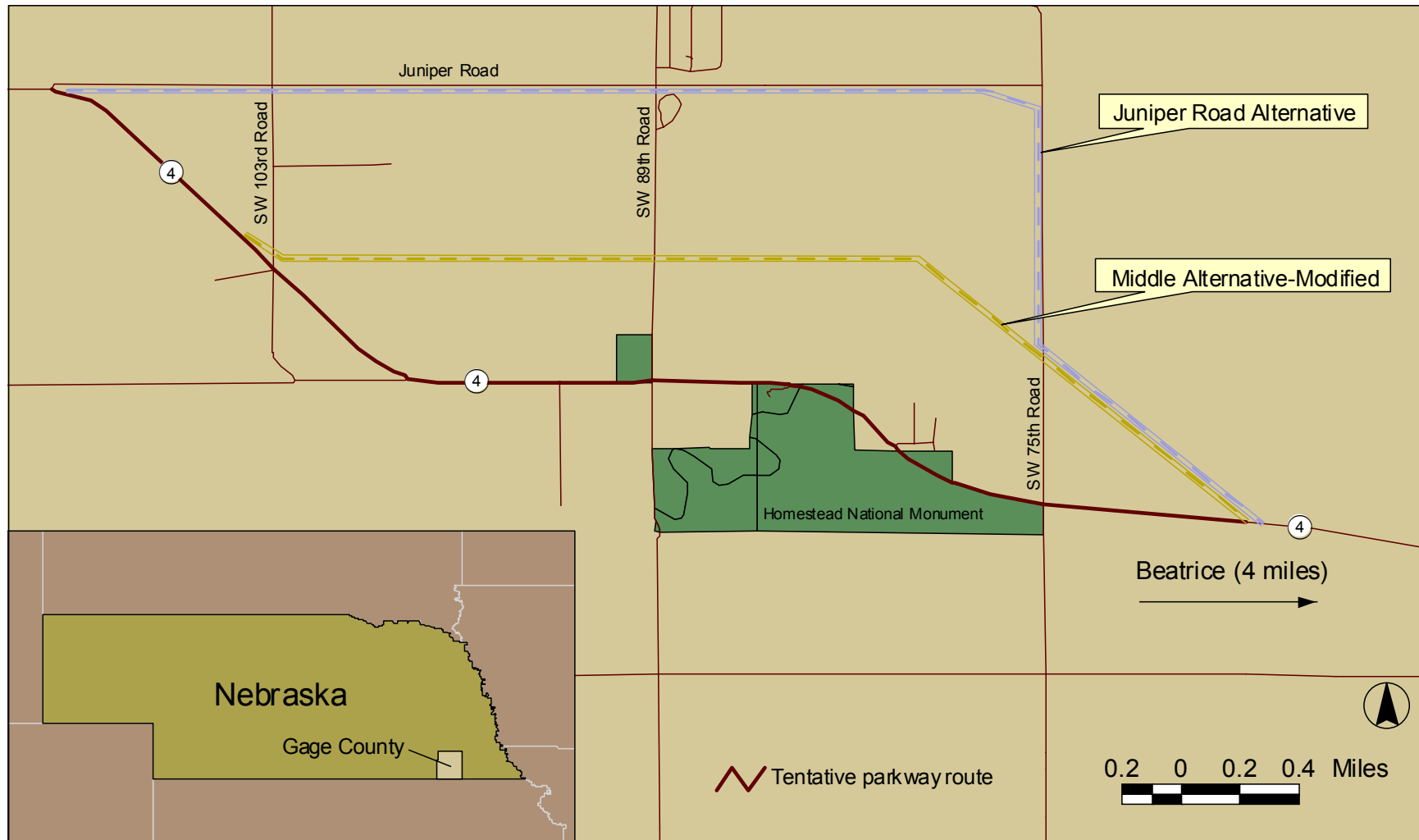
#### **4.5 End Points**

The 1999 GMP proposed a fairly short route for the Homestead Heritage Parkway where it would have fallen largely within the boundaries of the park: “The “Homestead Heritage Parkway” will begin where the access road (the abandoned segment of State Highway 4)

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 29

**FIGURE 7: PROPOSED ALIGNMENTS FOR REROUTING OF STATE HIGHWAY 4**



enters the eastern boundary of the monument and extend to the Freeman School.”<sup>20</sup> This is a distance of approximately one mile. The GMP does discuss the possibility of extending the parkway east to the intersection of State Highway 4 and Highway 136.

Throughout the course of the year, I spoke with people representing organizations to the east and west of these proposed endpoints. They expressed a great deal of interest in working to extend the parkway in both directions. Business and tourism representatives wanted to see the eastern end point stretch all the way into downtown Beatrice. The first western extension we discussed would have taken the roadway out to First Trinity Lutheran Church (at State Highway 4 and West 117<sup>th</sup> Road). However, I then met with members of the Community Improvement Association in Plymouth, a town about eight miles west of the park off State Highway 4. I discussed extending the parkway to Plymouth, and they were very interested in this possibility. If the parkway did run from downtown Beatrice to Plymouth, the length of the roadway would be approximately 14 miles.

The 1999 GMP also mentions the possibility of a “public biking and/or hiking path...integrated into the redesign of State Highway 4.”<sup>21</sup> The Nebraska Department of Roads has indicated that they are willing to consider a trail running along the state’s right-of-way adjacent to the road. In addition, local and state officials have discussed extending the existing bike trail in Beatrice out to Homestead National Monument. Ideally, this trail spur would connect to a planned trail from Lincoln to Beatrice to create a large regional trail network with the park as a destination point.

#### **4.6 Presentations and Public Outreach**

Beatrice, Nebraska, is a small, tight-knit rural community where the development of personal relationships is an especially important part of the planning process. As such, my early planning approach involved a great deal of interaction with people in Beatrice and surrounding communities. The following sections describe various outreach activities in the local Beatrice and Gage County areas as well as a project presentation in Washington, DC.

##### Farm Visits

During October and November of 2006, I visited several farms and agricultural operations in Gage County. These visits had a twofold purpose. First, I wanted to familiarize myself with contemporary agricultural practices in the southeastern Nebraska region as I had minimal knowledge of farming and rural life. Second, these visits were an opportunity to establish relationships with people in the community – connections that would prove very useful later in the year.

Park staff helped me identify and contact people who were willing to allow me to tour their farms and facilities. The following is a list of these individuals and the topics we discussed:

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

- Hogs, irrigation, crops: Jim Ensz
- Dairies: Steve Kyser
- Chickens: Gary Weise
- Corn harvesting: Mike Goosen
- Soy bean harvesting: Dick Goertzen, Kyle Spilker
- Grain storage, distribution: Andrew Johansen (Southeast Nebraska Cooperative)
- Tractors, traditional farming: Glenn Brinkman, Gary Higgins
- Irrigation, windmills: John Weichel, David Suey (Dempster Industries)

All of my tours were extremely educational and informative. In November 2005 a film scouting team came to the park from the National Park Service's Harpers Ferry Center; they planned to start gathering footage for the new Homestead Heritage Center film the following spring. The park superintendent asked me to serve as the team's liaison and set up a similar series of farm tours for the scouting team. We met with many of the same people as the team collected background information. When they did return in the spring, several of our tour guides agreed to interviews and allowed the crew to film on their properties and in their facilities. Future parkway planning, I believe, will benefit greatly from these relationships with local producers. These established connections and positive experiences will help bridge any gaps between planners and the community as well as develop trust and consensus during the planning process.

#### Individual Stakeholder Meetings

Soon after I arrived at the park, I worked with the superintendent to develop a list of people who would be involved in the planning of the Homestead Heritage Parkway at some point in the process. We decided that an effective first step would be for me to contact these individuals and set up a series of one-on-one meetings to introduce myself and the parkway concept. Over the course of the next several months, I gave presentations to over 75 people at the city, county, and state levels to describe our vision of this project, solicit feedback and address concerns, and discuss the ways in which these individuals could get involved in future planning efforts. Additionally, I discussed the parkway project with approximately another 80 attendees at local Kiwanis Club, Rotary Club, and park volunteer meetings.

These meetings were very productive for a number of reasons. First, most of these people had heard about the parkway idea, but were not able to envision it in terms of design and content. I put together a PowerPoint presentation with photographs of other parkways and similar roadways as well as sketches of different pullout designs used in the National Park Service road system. Second, I met with some people who perhaps did not think of themselves as key players in the parkway planning process. For example, I met with pastors at two churches in the State Highway 4 corridor – First Mennonite Church and First Trinity Lutheran Church – and discussed the possibility of including their sites in the parkway route. The pastors were interested in this prospect and we discussed different ways the church histories related to homesteading and agricultural history. Third, these meetings helped illuminate particular concerns related to the parkway planning, including the rerouting of State Highway 4 and the park's relationship

with the Nebraska Department of Roads, the traffic and speed limit effects of such a roadway, and the impact of the parkway on local tourism-related services and businesses.

While these issues would have likely emerged in other planning forums, this more informal and intimate meeting environment gave people the opportunity to candidly express their concerns – which sometimes were reservations about the project – and provided me a chance to clarify my role in the planning process. This was most useful in terms of the rerouting concern as many people saw the rerouting and the parkway planning as inextricably intertwined. The two processes are related and the parkway planning and design is dependent on the rerouting. However, I made it clear to people that the rerouting is a Nebraska Department of Roads project and not a National Park Service one. As such, we expect to be involved in the process, but we will not be overseeing it nor will we be responsible for the decision making.

For most people, this was their first exposure to specific details about the Homestead Heritage Parkway project. People were generally very responsive to the parkway concept and expressed interest in staying involved. Appendix B is a contact list of these various partners and stakeholders.

#### Transportation Research Board Meeting

In January 2006, I attended the annual Transportation Research Board (TRB) meeting in Washington, DC. I presented a poster at the conference during a session entitled “Transportation Needs of National Parks and Public Lands: Recent Research.” A number of the other presenters were also part of the National Park Transportation Scholars Program; this session allowed us to meet and learn about the various transportation projects taking place in other parks. The session was very well-attended and I had the opportunity to present my work to many conference attendees, including National Park Service staff, consultants, and academics. The general feedback was very positive and people – both from the National Park Service and from other sectors – found the Homestead Heritage Parkway an innovative, creative, and compelling roadway concept.

During TRB I also attended a reception at the National Park Foundation where I met foundation and National Park Service staff, current and former scholars, and supporters of the program. This was another excellent opportunity to showcase the Homestead Heritage Parkway project to a broader audience. After the TRB conference, I displayed the poster in the entrance area at the park. This allowed us to share the parkway project concept with the general public.

#### Working Group

In the spring of 2006, I convened a working group to meet monthly and help guide me through the final months of my assignment at the park. I had hoped for more participation in these meetings – a couple people were able to attend regularly, but generally we found it difficult to coordinate busy schedules. In addition, the planning was not moving ahead at a very rapid pace, and so I found it increasingly more difficult to ask people to take time out of their schedules for working group meetings. A core

group of us did meet three or four times, but eventually I looked to my final community presentation rather than these regular meetings as an opportunity to gather feedback.

#### **4.7 Parkway Content and Design**

The Homestead Heritage Parkway is what can broadly be described as an “educational parkway.” In this sense, it differs somewhat from the parkway and related road projects described earlier; at the same time it also incorporates many of the particular features of those roadways. For example, the parkway closely resembles the self-guided auto tour routes in terms of purpose and length. It is most similar to the Silos and Smokestacks route in Iowa in terms of its thematic content. With its natural views and vistas, it is in some ways similar to scenic parkways. Ultimately, this roadway will be quite unique. The following sections describe in more detail specific plans and features of the parkway.

##### Educational Theme: History of Agriculture

The new Homestead Heritage Center will include museum exhibits tracing the history of homesteading with descriptions of the many challenges homesteaders faced in cultivating their land. The parkway will both supplement and enhance these museum displays by providing a unique interpretive and interactive experience for visitors. At a series of pullout sites, visitors will learn about the history of agriculture during homesteading times as well as techniques used presently in much of the agricultural landscape surrounding the park. These sites will include interpretive panels, but ideally the pullouts will also include displays of actual equipment – both historical and contemporary – and even demonstration areas. These waysides will allow visitors to gain a richer and fuller understanding of agricultural history by seeing displays in the actual contexts of use.

The general management plan suggests that the principal interpretive and educational theme of the parkway be agriculture and the “farm-to-market” concept, including topics ranging from the family farm and different crop varieties to the tools and types of equipment that are used in farming operations. The modern farm could also be compared to those of the homesteaders through presentation of topics such as crop yields and time devoted to ensure successful harvests.

In addition to the educational features of the parkway, this roadway will take advantage of the unique natural vistas of the park. The park’s 100 acres of prairie grass make up the second-oldest restored tall-grass prairie in the United States. The parkway will run adjacent to this land, and pullouts will provide visitors access to views of the prairie much as it appeared to homesteaders in the 1800s. The interpretive sites would also explore the rich biodiversity of prairie ecosystems.

##### Telling the Agricultural Story

While the parkway’s general theme of agricultural history may seem clearly defined and straightforward, this “story” is actually an immense one which can be thought of as a tree with numerous branches extending over space and through time. For example, the interpretive link between homesteading and contemporary farming practices could trace the changes and evolution of agricultural practices from homesteading days to the present. An alternate way to tell this story would be to focus on the stories of current



farmers who are descendants of homesteaders or have other connections to homesteading history. Even with such general guidelines and a focus on southeastern Nebraska, a number of questions remain about the scope of interpretation. How do you distill down 100 years of agricultural equipment, technology, and practices into a manageable interpretive experience? Do you provide snapshots of agriculture at particular points in time? Focus on the most prevalent crops in the area? Talk about different stages in the process from pre-planting to post-harvest? There are numerous ways to approach what is a very complex topic.

The development of wayside exhibits at National Park Services sites generally includes a number of distinct stages: a) project startup, b) site analysis, c) wayside exhibit development, d) pre-production, e) production, and f) installation and maintenance. As part of my planning work, I drafted an outline for 12 wayside topics (Table 1). This exercise was intended to provide at least a skeleton of exhibit topics – what an exhibit designer would do in the first stages of wayside development. It was by no means intended to be an all-encompassing history of agriculture. Rather, I hoped it would provide a starting point for larger discussions about the parkway content. I deliberately chose to focus on the steps involved in growing corn, the crop most often associated with agriculture in this region. I organized the exhibit topics in a sequential “then versus now” format and, in terms of the crop production process, used the different types of equipment to illustrate the farm-to-market process.

In September 2006, near the end of my assignment at the park, I presented this list of wayside topics at a final meeting of stakeholders and partners. I received a great deal of feedback from participants about these topics, including the following specific points:

- Topics should be broader and more universal
- Include discussion about livestock (chicken, hogs, cattle, sheep) because this was and continues to be a part of agriculture in this region
- Do not focus just on corn; talk about other crops such as soybeans, sorghum, wheat, alfalfa
- Talk about how farms used to focus on self-sufficiency first and foremost
- Do not focus only on the final agricultural product; look at other aspects of the farming experience
- Draw from the stories people tell; many of these stories have been passed down through the generations
- Look at the relationship between people and their land because this is very important

These suggestions emerged from what was a lively and engaging discussion. Most significant to me were the comments about people’s stories – particularly older people in the community – as an essential and valuable resource for agricultural history and information. Throughout the year I became progressively more convinced that visioning exercises would be an extremely useful planning tool in the case of the Homestead

**TABLE 1: HOMESTEAD HERITAGE PARKWAY WAYSIDE TOPICS**

	<u>THEN</u>	<u>NOW</u>
1. Agriculture in Southeastern Nebraska	Mention Mennonites – not all farmers were homesteaders	Corn, soybeans, milo, wheat, alfalfa
2. Agricultural Workhorses: Then and Now	Draft animals	Tractors
3. Preparing the Land	Plows, harrows	No till (because of pesticides), disc (used to work up soil)
4. Planting the Seed	Grain drills, corn planters	Drills, planters on tractors
5. Weeding the Fields	Cultivators	Pesticides (some people use cultivators)
6. Irrigating the Crops	No irrigation, ditch/gravity irrigation	Center pivots, aquifer (need to maintain water sources)
7. Harvesting the Corn	Corn binders, shockers, pickers, huskers, shellers	Combines
8. Crop Yields	Yields for self-sustainability	Seed hybrids, improvements in yields
9. Threats to Crop Production	Drought, prairie fire, locust, hail, crop disease	Drought, prairie fire, hail, crop disease, monocultures
10. Technological Innovation	Steam power	Internal combustion engines
11. From Farm to Market: Storing and Transporting Grain	Silos, trains	Grain elevators, trains
12. Agricultural Markets	Local economies, family farms	Family farms vs. corporate farms, destination of grain – supports livestock (hogs and cattle), dairy, and poultry production, trading/commodities, globalization

Heritage Parkway. The goal of this planning approach is to involve the community as fully as possible in the development of a project in order to utilize their knowledge, access their resources, and generate a sense of personal investment in the outcome of the process. The following discussion describes the concept of visioning and its distinct advantages over other planning techniques:

### **Introduction to Visioning<sup>22</sup>**

The Webster dictionary defines vision as “the act or power of imagination” and “a mode of seeing or conceiving.” To create a vision, you and your fellow community members should use the power of imagination to envision what you would like this neighborhood to become. Once you have this vision, you can begin to create a plan to turn your vision into a reality. Communities that take the time to articulate their visions have greater success in achieving their goals and implementing their plans of action.

Benefits of visioning:

- Generates encouragement and common hopes and goals
- Offers a possibility for fundamental change
- Gives people a sense of control
- Gives a group something to move toward
- Generates passion and creative thinking

With problem solving, a group can become mired in technical details and political problems and may even disagree on how to define the problem. Problem solving, although useful, rarely results in any real fundamental change. *A problem is something negative to move away from, whereas a vision is something positive to move toward.*

The Homestead Heritage Parkway waysides will ultimately encompass the story of the surrounding community. As such, the project is inextricably linked to the people of the area; much rich and detailed information exists in the form of oral histories and personal memorabilia. Visioning exercises would be an effective means to capture and incorporate these elements of agricultural history while at the same time generating community support and buy-in for this project. These stories will be communicated at the interpretive roadside pullouts via exhibits, displays, and possibly traveler information radio broadcasts and other emerging media.

### **Pullout Sites and Wayside Design**

Pullout designs vary in a number of ways, including vehicle capacity, interpretive features, and visitor amenities. The simpler pullouts are designed for a few cars and short stops. For example, the information pullout has space for two or three cars stopping for about five minutes (Figure 8). The site has an information sign or panel and curbing, but

---

<sup>22</sup> Adapted from Water Resources Institute “How to Conduct a ‘Visioning’ Exercise” handout.  
<<http://www.gdrc.org/ngo/vision-dev.html>>

does not provide seating. On the other hand, the picnic wayside is one of the more complicated pullout designs with such features as seating and restroom areas, picnic areas, extended views or vistas, and limited activity areas (Figure 9).<sup>23</sup>

Pullouts can be even simpler in design than the information pullout or more sophisticated than the picnic wayside. Pullout design is dependent on a number of factors, including the topography of easement land, the cost of production, and the overall scope of the roadway project.

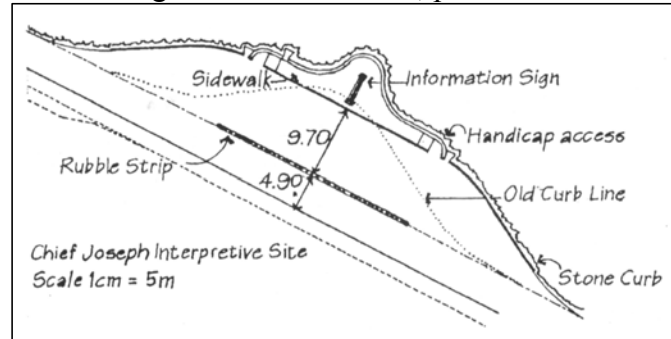


FIGURE 8: INFORMATION PULLOUT

I had the opportunity to correspond with a road designer from the Nebraska Department of Roads. She and I discussed various issues related to pullout design and the Homestead Heritage Parkway. She suggested that we keep the following issues in mind as we progress forward with the parkway planning:

- Pullout locations can vary, but a good rough estimate is one pullout for every 1.5 miles
- Intersection sight distances would need to be appropriate – motorists need to be able to re-enter the highway safely and see far enough ahead to slow down at wayside access points
- Consideration should be given to conflicts with other access points (e.g., driveways and intersections)
- Allow for a 500-foot to 800-foot zone at each proposed pullout location for the geometric design of that pullout
- Geometric layout could either be taper or intersection (radius) type
- Layout should probably include room for a bus to get approximately 20 feet off the roadway<sup>24</sup>

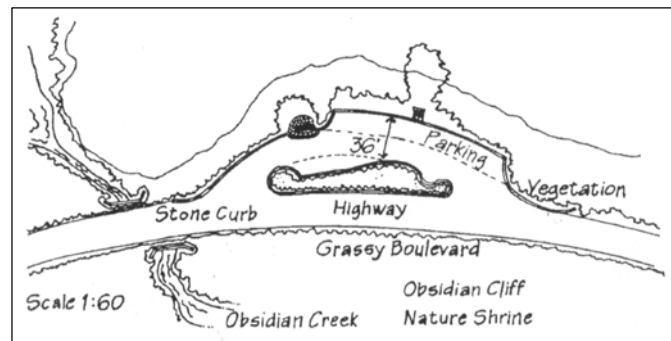


FIGURE 9: PICNIC WAYSIDE

Park management would have to work with highway engineers and road designers to identify appropriate pullout locations and designs. We currently have relationships with Nebraska Department of Roads staff (Appendix B). Engineering staff from the National Park Service, the City of Beatrice, and Gage County will also likely be involved in the road design process in the future.

<sup>23</sup> Davis, Timothy, Todd A. Croteau, and Christopher H. Marston. 2004. *America's National Park Roads and Parkways: Drawings from the Historic American Engineering Record*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, p. 163.

<sup>24</sup> From email correspondences with Lorraine Legg, Nebraska Department of Roads, Roadway Design.

### Tourism and Agritourism

The ultimate goal of the parkway is to increase visitation to the park by highlighting homesteading and agricultural history. The parkway has the potential to spur tourism and economic development along the road itself, in downtown Beatrice, and in the greater Beatrice region. The Southeastern Nebraska area, what has been dubbed the “Pioneer Country Region,”<sup>25</sup> is especially significant because of the three transportation corridors that have helped shaped the state and the country: the Missouri River, the Oregon Trail, and Interstate 80.<sup>26</sup> Homestead National Monument is one of the area’s highlights and the “Freeman exhibits, along with hiking trails through 100 acres of restored native tall grass prairie, offer visitors two of the most popular forms of Nebraska tourism: western historic experiences and ecological interests.”<sup>27</sup> The Nebraska Department of Economic Development’s Division of Travel and Tourism held a series of public meetings where participants recommended that the tourism industry support the park’s long-range plans, including the Homestead Heritage Parkway, and encourage more cross-promotion and development partnerships.<sup>28</sup>

The Homestead Heritage Parkway corridor might be especially appropriate for agritourism venues. One description of agritourism broadly describes it as “an alternative enterprise allowing an agricultural operation to earn higher profits by replacing or supplementing traditional agricultural operations with innovative and sustainable ventures.”<sup>29</sup> Another perspective on agritourism is to understand it as “a way of ‘adding value’ to agricultural products or services before leaving the farm or ranch.”<sup>30</sup> In this context, agritourism provides some agricultural experience for visitors. However, the particular farm practices, visitors’ level of involvement, and the final output vary significantly. The following is a list of different categories of agritourism enterprises and some representative examples<sup>31</sup>:

#### **Recreation and Education**

- Farm tours
- Workshops/demonstrations (milking, wool processing, apple pressing/cider)
- Harvest experiences
- Hunting
- Bird/wildlife watching
- Scenic trails (walking, biking)
- Star gazing

---

<sup>25</sup> Nebraska Department of Economic Development, Division of Travel and Tourism Division. 2004. *2004 Nebraska Tourism Industry Development Plan*.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 233.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 238.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Nebraska Department of Economic Development, Division of Travel and Tourism. 2005. *Nebraska’s Guide to Agri-Tourism & Eco-Tourism Development*, p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 3

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

**Livestock and Poultry**

- Horseback riding
- Petting farms/exotic animal farms

**Service**

- Farm/ranch vacations
- Bed and breakfast
- Cabin rentals
- Camping
- Restaurants
- Picnic sites
- Wagon/sleigh rides
- Wildlife viewing/photography
- Farm-themed playground
- Guided fishing/hunting/birding
- Agriculture-related crafts/gifts/products

**Value-Added and Direct Sales**

- U-pick operations
- Roadside sales
- Greenhouses to extend growing season
- Dairy products
- Meat and poultry products
- Breads/jams/jellies/condiments

**Vegetable and Other Crops**

- Tree farm
- Winery/microbrewery tours
- Birdseed
- Popcorn

**Special Events**

- Farmers' market
- Farm schools
- Living history presentations
- Traditional agriculture demonstrations

The interest in tourism to rural areas has steadily increased in recent years. According to a recent article, the Travel Industry Association of America reports that “62 percent of U.S. adults, or 87 million, have taken a trip to a small town or village within the past three years and 58 percent, or 84.7 million, included an historic activity or event on a trip during the past year.”<sup>32</sup> Agritourism has helped revitalize and sustain many rural communities across the country by allowing residents to diversify their income sources and capitalize on the tourism assets in the area.

---

<sup>32</sup> Jafari, Samira. “History calls tourists to rural towns.” Associated Press, September 7, 2006.

As Nebraska's past and present is rooted deeply in agricultural history, the potential for agritourism in the state is considerable. The tourism industry and state officials understand this, and in January 2006 the governor convened a one-day statewide workshop about agritourism in Nebraska. I had the opportunity to attend this workshop and learn more about agritourism generally and the ways in which it might relate to the Homestead Heritage Parkway project. This was a very informative event, and it highlighted for me the significant opportunities for agritourism development as the parkway planning progresses. Ideally, some coordination would occur between these two efforts in order to ensure that they complement each other as much as possible.

## **5. Project Costs and Funding**

### **5.1 Estimated Project Costs**

As previously discussed, wayside development can be a costly, lengthy, and involved process with a number of stages. This process will involve collaboration between park staff and design staff from Harpers Ferry Center, the National Park Service division providing parks with interpretation and visitor planning design services. At this early stage in the parkway planning, project costs are somewhat difficult to estimate as many different factors may affect costs as the planning progresses. However, Table 2 shows a preliminary budget for the design and production of 12 wayside exhibits. The total project costs are estimated to be \$93,500. This is the cost for the exhibit display panels only and does not include other costs related to the pullouts such as the surveying and preparation of sites, acquisition of display artifacts, and fabrication and installation of amenities (e.g., benches, curbing, kiosks). However, this budget does suggest that the final costs for the Homestead Heritage Parkway pullouts will likely be quite substantial.

### **5.2 Funding Overview**

Throughout the course of the year, I researched various grant opportunities (primarily private corporate sources) that would be especially appropriate for the Homestead Heritage Parkway with exhibits related to historical and contemporary practices and their environmental impacts. I submitted an application for \$2,420 from the Kodak American Greenways Awards Program to help with the first phase of the wayside development process. We expect notification of the final award decision by the end of September. I also submitted a letter of intent to the Monsanto Fund; this request was subsequently denied. I did complete a grant application for the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Foundation, but we did not receive approval to submit this application. If this BNSF request is approved in the future, park staff can use this completed application.

Other possible sources of funding are private grants available through the following companies: Pioneer, Reinke, Koch, Agrium, Cargill, and Valmont. The grant programs for these corporations have some focus on education or environmental stewardship. The Homestead Heritage Parkway falls under both these categories as it will provide people access to information about general agricultural history and some overview of the relationships between prairie ecology, the environment, and agricultural practices. Agricultural industry groups are other possible funding sources. These include

**TABLE 2: PRELIMINARY WAYSIDE DESIGN AND PRODUCTION COSTS**

Homestead Heritage Parkway Project					
Homestead National Monument of America (Beatrice, Nebraska)					
Project Budget - Wayside Development, Design, and Production					
Budget for this project					\$ 93,520.00
Wayside planning & design	Staff	Days	Hours	Hourly rate	Total rate
Planning	Planner	5	40	\$ 55.00	\$ 2,200.00
Design	Designer	5	40	\$ 55.00	\$ 2,200.00
Total planning & design					\$ 4,400.00
Wayside proposal development	Staff	Days	Hours	Hourly rate	Total rate
Planner	Planner	10	80	\$ 55.00	\$ 4,400.00
Designer	Designer	10	80	\$ 55.00	\$ 4,400.00
Total proposal development					\$ 8,800.00
Travel for planning & design/proposal development	# of Staff	Cost per person		Days	Total cost
Airfare - Dulles to Lincoln, NE	2	\$ 500.00			\$ 1,000.00
Per diem - Gage County	2	\$ 91.00		5	\$ 910.00
Rental car	1	\$ 50.00		5	\$ 250.00
Parking at airport	2	\$ 10.00		5	\$ 100.00
Gas, misc, parking, tolls, etc.	2	\$ 30.00		5	\$ 300.00
Total travel for planning & design/proposal development					\$ 2,560.00
Wayside plan development	Staff	# of panels	Rate per panel		Total rate
Planning	Planner	12	\$ 1,000.00		\$ 12,000.00
Design	Designer	12	\$ 1,750.00		\$ 21,000.00
Total plan development					\$ 33,000.00
Panel & base production	Production element	# of panels	Rate per panel		Total rate
Panel production - labor		12	\$ 450.00		\$ 5,400.00
Base production - labor		12	\$ 150.00		\$ 1,800.00
Panel production - materials	Porcelain (36 x 24)	12	\$ 2,300.00		\$ 27,600.00
Base production - materials	Low profile (36 x 24)	12	\$ 830.00		\$ 9,960.00
Total panel & base production					\$ 44,760.00
Total project costs					\$ 93,520.00
Other related funding & in-kind donation sources					
National Park Transportation Scholars Program	Funding for transportation planner (9/05 - 9/06)				\$ 50,000.00
Volunteer hours	Volunteers available as needed for various parkway-related projects				
In-kind donations	Donations for displays (e.g., seed, landscaping supplies, antique and contemporary farm equipment)				



the corn, sorghum, soybean, and wheat producer organizations in the state as well as dairy, beef, and pork producer groups.

## **6. Planning Challenges and Recommendations**

### **6.1 Planning Challenges**

In reviewing my activities this past year, I reflected on several of the planning challenges specific to the Homestead Heritage Parkway project. While the overall response to the proposed project was extremely positive, particular issues did emerge which impacted my work and will likely affect future planning efforts:

1. Community members are concerned about the State Highway 4 rerouting, particularly which alignment the new route will follow and the impact on regular vehicle travel. During my planning work, I tried to alleviate these concerns as well as separate the rerouting project from the parkway project. However, this will undoubtedly reemerge as an issue when the Nebraska Department of Roads continues its rerouting plans.
2. As a long-term project, maintaining public interest and participation in the parkway planning process was difficult. For example, the working group had a core group of members who met with me regularly and provided an enormous amount of useful feedback. Over time, however, it became clear that the relatively slow pace of the planning did not warrant monthly meetings and we discontinued our regularly scheduled meetings. Planners will have to engage and involve people in the planning process while also ensuring that participants' time and energy is being maximized.
3. At this early stage in the process, I found it difficult to find viable funding sources. I was able to locate a number of potential corporate and foundation sources, but actually submitting applications at this time seemed premature. Because funders generally want to see some kind of developed project plan and as well as financial commitments from other agencies and organizations, I found the options fairly limited. This situation will change as the planning moves forward and the parkway concept becomes more established and developed.
4. The proposed parkway route – which now spans 14 miles and two counties – will require a substantial number of agreements for various land use and acquisition needs. Planners should anticipate that this process of negotiation with land owners, local governmental entities, and state agencies will be a significant task in itself.

These are not challenges which threaten the viability of this project. However, they should be taken into consideration and every effort should be made to address these issues as they arise during the course of the planning.

## 6.2 Planning Recommendations

The following are recommendations for future Homestead Heritage Parkway planning. These recommendations are in no particular order, and most of these recommendations are long-term due primarily to the extended start date of the project.

- **Develop timeline in conjunction with State Highway 4 rerouting plan**

The Homestead Heritage Parkway is a long-term project with a timeline that will be closely related to the rerouting of State Highway 4. Planners should consider the long-term scope of the parkway project – due in part to the rerouting – in developing a feasible project timeline. However, parkway planning should continue prior to the actual surveying and rerouting itself (the road survey start date is 2009) as this will be a complicated process involving a number of partners, jurisdictions, and collaborative efforts.

- **Maintain relationships with partners and stakeholders**

Although the Homestead Heritage Parkway is a National Park Service project, it has the potential to impact Gage County and even the entire southeastern Nebraska region. As such, the success of this project will likely depend on cooperative working relationships with a number of organizations and governmental entities in the area. Many of these relationships have been established – through the parkway one-on-one meetings and the working group or through other projects at the park. Maintaining relationships with partners and stakeholders is extremely important. Ideally, park management would keep these individuals updated on parkway developments through a regular notice such as a letter that goes out quarterly. This could just be a brief discussion about parkway developments; even if there are no significant developments, this is still an opportunity to convey to people that this project remains part of the park's long-range plans.

- **Focus planning on general wayside design**

At this point in the process, planners should focus on general wayside design and content. Some pullout locations outside the portion of State Highway 4 to be rerouted can now be identified (e.g., First Trinity Lutheran Church and First Mennonite Church on State Highway 4). However, the location of a number of pullouts will depend on the outcome of rerouting plans. Further development of the agricultural “story” – particularly through community participation – would be a useful activity in this pre-rerouting stage. A more detailed wayside outline, one supported by community consensus, would facilitate the establishment of the Homestead Heritage Parkway at a later date. If pullout installation is staggered (i.e., pullouts outside of the rerouting zone go in first), then the more immediate focus on wayside design and a wayside plan will be useful in moving the process forward.

- **Continue fundraising research and activities**

The long-term scope of the parkway planning also impacts fundraising strategies and opportunities. Grant research should continue with a particular focus on funding sources that will assist with early wayside design expenses. Future efforts should also involve the Friends of Homestead, a group of volunteers who do advocacy and fundraising activities on behalf of the park. This group has been active for many years in the Homestead Heritage Center project; a similar long-term partnership between the park and the Friends of Homestead on the parkway project would prove useful.

- **Use visioning exercises to actively engage local community**

Visioning exercises are an extremely effective planning tool, particularly in the case of the Homestead Heritage Parkway. This approach to planning asks community members to work together in an extremely collaborative and interactive way in order to develop a project idea. The result is a very community-based understanding of planning issues where each participant is able effectively to articulate ideas and concerns. A rich source of information about agricultural history in Gage County and southeastern Nebraska exists in the form of oral histories and informal knowledge passed down from generation to generation. Visioning exercises would allow planners to access these less public sources of information while also encouraging community members to feel invested in the planning process.

- **Explore agritourism possibilities and develop plan**

The potential for agritourism ventures – both public and private – in the Homestead Heritage Parkway corridor is extremely high, particularly with the natural connections between the parkway’s theme of agricultural history and agritourism’s focus on the agricultural experience. Planners should work with Beatrice and Gage County tourism and economic development agencies to develop a long-term agritourism plan that both complements and enhances the parkway plan. Various state agencies, particularly the Nebraska Department of Economic Development’s Division of Travel and Tourism, also provide guidance and support to communities wanting to establish agritourism industries.

- **Consider regional tourism opportunities**

I spent this year meeting with representatives from a number of agencies and organization which are or will become involved in the parkway planning. However, there are opportunities to broaden this network and include other entities in the region. One stakeholder described his vision of a “spider web” effect where the park and the parkway would be the starting point of a regional tourism experience. People could branch out from the parkway to other historical sites – Rock Creek Station State Historical Park, for example – and points of interest in adjacent communities such as Odell and Wymore. Future planning efforts should include the incorporation of new partners and stakeholders in the

Homestead Heritage Parkway planning in order to have as diverse a base of entities championing this project as possible.

## 7. Conclusion

The Homestead Heritage Parkway has the potential to be one of the most innovative and creative roadway projects in the National Park Service system. It will provide visitors with a truly unique educational and interpretive experience. Visitors to the park learn about many aspects of homesteading history, including the social, cultural, and economic impacts of the Homestead Act of 1862. Central to this complex history is the history of agriculture: the importance of agriculture to the survival of homesteaders, the practices used to cultivate crops and raise livestock, the impacts of agriculture on prairie ecosystems and the environment, and the developments in equipment and technology.

Visitors to the park will learn about the history of agriculture at the new Homestead Heritage Center's museum, and the parkway will help complement this interpretive information. At the various pullout sites, people will not only examine panel displays about homesteading history. They will also have the opportunity to experience the context of this history by seeing actual equipment and – in terms of contemporary agriculture – the use of this equipment in the surrounding agricultural vistas. In this sense, the parkway is an experiential educational tool that will add an entirely new dimension to visitors' understandings of homesteading history.

This report is intended to be both a summary of parkway-related planning activities from September 2005 to September 2006 and a guidance document for future planning efforts. The Homestead Heritage Parkway is a long-term project that will involve a great deal of additional planning, negotiation, and public participation. This parkway concept is of great interest to the community, and people want to see this project reach completion. Because the establishment of this project involves voluntary partnerships with local government and landowners, it is imperative that the planning process always be an inclusive, collaborative, and consensus-based one. Such an approach will ensure community participation and involvement and this in turn will engender maximum investment and commitment to the success of this project.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Homestead Heritage Parkway Congressional Authorization**

H.R. 38 – January 3, 2001

#### **Sec. 4. Cooperative Agreements**

The Secretary may enter into cooperative agreements with the State of Nebraska, Gage County, local units of government, private groups, and individuals for operation, maintenance, interpretation, recreation, and other purposes related the proposed Homestead Heritage Highway to be located in the general vicinity of the Monument.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Partner and Stakeholder Contact Information**

The following is contact information for partners and stakeholders (if available, the individual's email address has been included):

#### **Beatrice Chamber of Commerce**

Lori Warner, President  
226 South 6<sup>th</sup> Street  
Beatrice, NE 68310  
Phone: (402) 223-2338  
Email: lwarner@beatricechamber.com

#### **Beatrice City Council**

Mayor Dennis Schuster  
400 Ella Street  
Beatrice, NE 68310  
Phone: (402) 228-5200

#### **First Mennonite Church**

Pastors Weldon and Florence Schloneger  
6714 West State Highway 4  
Beatrice, NE 68310  
Phone: (402) 228-2231  
Email: wschloneger@hotmail.com

#### **First Trinity Lutheran Church**

Pastor Mark Rockenbach  
11668 West State Highway 4  
Beatrice, NE 68310  
Phone: (402) 228-0216

#### **Friends of Homestead National Monument of America**

Laureen Riedesel, President  
8523 West State Highway 4  
Beatrice, NE 68310  
Phone: (402) 223-3584  
Email: lriedesel@beatrice.lib.ne.us

**Gage County Board of Supervisors**

Dave Anderson, President  
42401 Odell Road  
Odell, NE 68415  
Phone: (402) 766-3790  
Email: dtanderson@diodecom.net

**Gage County Convention and Visitors Bureau**

Lori Warner, President  
226 South 6<sup>th</sup> Street  
Beatrice, NE 68310  
Phone: (402) 223-2338  
Email: lwarner@beatricechamber.com

**Gage County Economic Development**

Terri Dageford, Director of Business and Industry  
5109 West Scott Road, Suite 411  
Beatrice, NE 68310  
Phone: (402) 223-6650  
Email: terri@beatrice-ne.com

**Gage County Historical Society and Museum**

Lesa Arterburn, Director  
101 North 2<sup>nd</sup> Street  
PO Box 793  
Beatrice, NE 68310  
Phone: (402) 228-1679  
Email: gagecountymuseum@beatricene.com

**Gage County Zoning Department**

Marlin Kliewer, Superintendent  
823 South 8<sup>th</sup> Street  
Beatrice, NE 68310  
Phone: (402) 223-1395  
Email: gagehwy\_pz@hotmail.com

**Main Street Beatrice**

Renee Bauer, Program Manager  
205 N. 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
PO Box 125  
Beatrice, NE 68310  
Phone: (402) 223-3244  
Email: mainst@inebraska.com

**Nebraska Department of Roads**

Steve McBeth, Engineer/Rich Ruby, District Engineer  
1500 Highway 2  
PO Box 94759  
Lincoln, NE 68509  
Phone: (402) 479-4417/(402) 471-0850  
Email: smcbeth@dor.state.ne.us/rruby@dor.state.ne.us

**Plymouth Community Improvement Association**

Brad Grummert, Chairman  
72345 573<sup>rd</sup> Avenue  
Plymouth, NE 68424  
Phone: (402) 656-4794

**Senator Dennis Byars' Office**

Senator Dennis Byars /Janet Anderson, Legislative Aide  
State Capitol Room 1208  
Lincoln, NE 68509  
Phone: (402) 471-2620

**Southeast Community College**

Dennis Headrick, Vice President for Instruction/Tom Cardwell, Dean  
4771 West Scott Road  
Beatrice, NE 68310  
Phone: (402) 228-8220  
Email: dheadric@southeast.edu/ tcardwel@southeast.edu

**Southeast Nebraska Development District**

John Trouba, Economic Development Consultant  
2631 "O" Street  
Lincoln, NE 68510  
Phone: (402) 475-2560  
Email: jtrouba@sensdd.org



## APPENDIX C

### Sample Visioning Exercises<sup>33</sup>

#### ***Exercise #1***

Purpose: To identify issues or opportunities in your neighborhood

Strategy: Imagining the neighborhood

Have all the participants sit at tables with large pieces of paper and colored markers. Ask them to recall the image they have of their neighborhood. Invite them to imagine that they are taking a walk through the area as it now exists. What is it about the neighborhood that they notice? What do they find important? Is the image positive here and less so in another place?

Tell them to sketch the image or images on large sheets of paper, telling a story with pictures and symbols and keeping words to a minimum. Their paper can look like a storyboard or comic book with a series of pictures showing different snapshots of various places. Or, it could be a single image like a bird's eye view or plan view, showing the whole neighborhood or just a portion of it. Allow perhaps 20 minutes for drawing, or more if they want it. Then one by one have them tape the pictures to the wall and describe how they feel about them.

Variation: If you do not want to spend a lot of time creating the maps and you want to give participants more time to think about what they imagine about their neighborhood, assign this as homework for the next meeting. Ask each person to describe his or her contribution. In some instances, individuals may not feel comfortable displaying their artwork. This also allows people to use different kinds of media.

The point of this exercise is to give each neighbor a chance to think about his or her image of the neighborhood and to share that image with the rest of the group – a group with whom they will be working intensely for the next six months. It is best to do this at the beginning of the planning process to help the neighbors come together as a working unit. They may find that they all have a similar image of the area. They may see that there is great disparity among their views. That is important information. It will help when discussions arise later about identifying issues and opportunities. Knowing where other people are coming from will help resolve conflicts, speed up the decision making process, and foster tolerance of other views.

---

<sup>33</sup> Adapted from City of Mesa "Introduction to Visioning" handouts. <[http://www.cityofmesa.org/neighbor/pdf/intro\\_visioning.pdf](http://www.cityofmesa.org/neighbor/pdf/intro_visioning.pdf)>

### ***Exercise #2***

Purpose: To identify issues, opportunities, and core values in a neighborhood

Strategy: Brainstorming

Create slips of paper with priority areas to be identified in the neighborhood action plan such as:

- Mobility management
- Traffic issues
- Public facilities and service – water, sewer, those things provided by a city
- Land use/zoning – is there a balance of uses?
- Housing – does your neighborhood provide a range of housing opportunities for its residents?
- Community appearance
- Public safety – pedestrian, bicycle, and automobile safety
- Open space and recreation
- Economic development
- Noise and other nuisances
- Other issues or opportunities

Divide the larger group into smaller groups of 4 to 6 people. Have each group pull a slip of paper out of a bowl to identify which priority area they will be discussing. Provide large pieces of paper and markers to each group. Ask the groups to take 20 minutes to brainstorm about issues and opportunities related to their assigned priority area. Remember that no idea contributed is bad or should be eliminated.

After the time is up, have each group present its items to the larger group and then add additional items as needed. At this point, the group can discuss the items presented to fuel the overall topic of neighborhood values and direction. You can also discuss the reasons a particular value is important. By splitting up the larger group into smaller groups, you will see more participation and less conflict. It establishes a guideline for discussion.

### ***Exercise #3***

Purpose: To easily manage discussion of neighborhood assets and opportunities

Strategy: Focus group

Pass out 3x5 index cards and pencils with at least 10 members present. Have each neighbor list a positive asset they like about their neighborhood. This should be a neighborhood asset they would like to maintain or preserve. Then have each person list one opportunity for change or an aspect of the neighborhood they would like to improve. Give at least 5 minutes so that people can thoughtfully contribute their ideas. Gather the cards together. The leader of the activity needs to read off each card and list the different assets on a white board where everyone present can see the ideas on the “table.” After all the ideas are listed, then open the floor for discussion. Remember there are no bad ideas.

This exercise will give everyone present a chance to contribute their ideas without speaking up in front of the entire group. It will curb excessive talking and irrelevant discussion that can often run for extended periods of time. This will identify key components of your vision statement by including assets to preserve and turning opportunities into goals for the future.

Helpful hints:

- Have each person tackle an issue or priority area keeping in mind the following issues:
  - What is the issue or conflict?
  - Frame it is a question
  - What are the consequences of not addressing this issue?
  - Brainstorm possible solutions or answers to the question
- After all issues are processed, present your ideas to the committee and open for a round robin discussion
- Weigh the consequences of not addressing the issue and think about whether they outweigh the effort of addressing the issue
- Use the committee's agreed upon decision making process to address this objective

Do not limit the group to one or two objectives as solutions for an issue. Develop several objectives to create many different solutions.

After you go through one of these processes, your group will have a vision of the kind of neighborhood they would like to see. You also have an action plan of items your neighborhood wants to begin working on.